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THREE
DISSERTATIONS

LIFE AND DEATH.



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DISSERTATIONS
ON
LIFE and DEATH.

VIZ.

I. A SURVEY of the BREVITY and VANITY of
HUMAN LIFE; with the Consolation administered
by the Christian System against both.

II. CONSIDERATIONS on St. PAUL's Wish,
to depart and be with CHRIST.

With an APPENDIX on the INTERMEDIATE STATE.

A N D

III. A COMMENTARY on Rev. xiv. 13. in which
the NATURE of DEATH is farther considered.

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DISSERTATION I.

A Survey of the BREVITY and VANITY of
HUMAN LIFE: With the Consolation
administered by the Christian System
against both.

THE mortality of man is no where . .
described with so much propriety
and elegance of expression, as in that pas-
sage of the book of *Job*, which the Church
hath adopted as a part of her *burial-service* ;
placing it in the front of those short and so-
lemn sentences, which are repeated at the
side of a Grave, and in which all the powers
of language are summoned together, to strike
the minds of the hearers with commiseration,
devotion, and self-abasement. — *Man
that is born of a woman is of few days and
full of trouble ! He cometh forth as a flower,
and is cut down : he fleeth as a shadow, and
continueth not.* Job xiv. 1, 2.

B

It

It is generally easier to understand any thing in its image than in itself, provided the image is well adapted. This method presents a subject to us under a compendium, which, if loosely considered, would be too large for the mind to comprehend; and might also be weakened by being extended. In its effect it certainly exceeds all others; on which account, Orators, Poets, and Mythologists, who have been skillful in their several ways, have never failed to apply themselves to the human mind through the interposition of sensible objects.

The relation between the visible world and the intellectual being very extensive, the most striking figures of speech must occur to us in *that book*, wherein the intellectual world is best understood and explained.

The vanity of human life is a wide subject: but it is here represented to us in a short compass, under the two images of a *flower* and a *shadow*.

Man *cometh forth as a flower*. The flowers of the field rise out of the earth; and man is also made of the dust. As the flower grows up, it is exposed to all the varieties of the weather; to rough blasts and clouded skies: it is driven to and fro with the wind, and
receives

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receives upon its tender head impetuous rain and storm from above. Man, in like manner, is frail and weak in his constitution, as the grass of the field ; and from his infancy is exercised with trouble.—Labour of body and carefulness of mind he is sure to inherit : to which are frequently added the loss of health and strength, which easily depart from him, and are not to be renewed, without the utmost difficulty and uncertainty. His temporal affairs are perplexed with unexpected disappointments : nay, the very comforts of his life are the sources of new trouble. If his possessions, his friends, or relations are dear to him, it is so uncertain whether *they* are to abide with *him*, or *he* with *them*, that he is exposed to perpetual fears and dejections of mind upon their account ; and may really suffer as much, or more, from his nearest friends as from his greatest enemies. And if his comforts and blessings can yield him trouble, his life can then be no other than a scene which is *full of trouble*.

Thus exercised with the weakness of childhood, the passions of youth, the cares and afflictions of riper years, man is at length *cut down* by death. He *cometh forth* like a flower, and comes to the same end : he grows

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up with a certain prospect of dying; as the flower groweth among the grafs, only to fall before the hand of the *mower*; that is, to be *cut down, dried up, and withered*. His beauty, if he had any, changes into a paleness shocking to the sight. If he had wealth, honour, and power, he sinks to the same level with that vulgar croud, which is daily swept away to people the regions of Death: as the finest flower, when once it is cut down, loses all its colours, and is no longer distinguished from the common grafs in the field.

There is something so apt and natural in this image, that we find it applied in many other places of the scripture. The royal Psalmist in particular thus expresseth himself: *As for man, his days are as grafs; as the flower of the field so he flourisheth. For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* The Prophet *Isaiah* hath spoken to the same purpose; and his words are followed by the apostles *St. James* and *St. Peter*. *All flesh is grafs, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grafs withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grafs.*

But

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But the life of man is also compared to a shadow.—*He fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.* In the morning, when the sun rises, shadows are born. At first they are weak and faint; but as the sun increases in height, near the noon-day, they grow strong and distinct: in the evening, as the sun goes down, the shadows are stretched out, and increase swiftly in their length; the moment the sun sets, they vanish, and darkness succeeds.

There is not a moment in the day, in which a shadow is at rest. The sun from his first rising is hastening forward to his setting; and the shadows move with a motion contrary to that of the sun. As soon as they appear in the morning they begin this progress, and never rest till they vanish into darkness. Here again we have another exact image of man's life; which, like a shadow, is empty and unsubstantial: it bears the form and figure of something, but will deceive those who mistake it for an enduring substance. As the shadow tends toward darkness throughout the whole day, man's life is nothing but a progress toward death.

Every hour and moment of the day bring the shadow nearer to the night; and every step a man takes brings him nearer to his grave.

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Such is his life in its most regular course : but how frequently does it happen, that the sun is hid from us, and the heaven overcast with clouds in the middle of the day ? In such a case, the shadow vanishes before its time : and man, in like manner, as frequently departs, before his progress is half finished. If the sun shines never so bright, we cannot be sure but that a cloud may soon arise from some quarter of the heavens, which by obscuring the sun shall cause the shadow to depart ; and there are then no more traces of it to be found than if it had never been. Thus in the strongest man, in whom there is every outward appearance of health, and a fair prospect of long life, some unexpected disease may arise, which in a very short time shall *change his countenance, and send him away*. Many changes happen in the day between the rising and the setting of the sun ; yet the existence of a shadow depends altogether on this uncertainty in the face of the sky. And man's life is as mutable ; it depends upon the state of a perishable body, in which some cloud may be arising, while he expects nothing but a continuance of the sun-shine 'till the day hath fulfilled its regular course.

The

The condition of mortality is therefore represented under no disadvantages, but such as are real and natural to it, in this description—*He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not;* or, as it is more plainly expressed in the original—*he fleeth as a shadow, and standeth not still*—his life is not stationary at any period of it: but, like the shadow upon a sundial, is always moving forward to the hours of darkness.

In all this nothing has been declared but what is commonly known: for no man can be ignorant of that, which by the experience of every day appears to be the common lot of all men. Yet this is very wonderful, though it is very common. And let us now enquire into the reasons of it.

Man was the last and most perfect of the works of God. The Sun, Moon, and Stars, glorious as they are, were placed in the heavens at the bare word or command of God. Trees and plants were made to grow upon the earth, and the various sorts of animals were endued with life by the same word.

But when man was to be created, there was a formal consultation in heaven; and this creature came forth from the hands of his

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Maker, adorned with the image and likeness of God himself. A *spirit of life* was *breathed* into him from the divine nature; he was made but *little lower than the angels* of light, and *all things were put in subjection under his feet*. How does it happen then, that the Sun and Moon, which are far inferior in dignity, retain their places and their glory, while man is changed, and sent away, and the place he possessed knoweth him no more? The oak, and many other trees, endure for several hundred years. Men were born when they were planted; yet the trees thrive and flourish, while those men are turned into dust beneath their roots *. The Lord of all

* The longevity of Trees, compared with the Mortality of the Planters, yields a contrast so obvious as well as mortifying, that it could not well escape the observation of the poets.

—Neque harum, quas colis, arborum
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur. *Hor.*

Esculus in primis, quæ, quantum vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
Ergo non hiemes illam, non flabra, neque imbres
Convellunt: *immota manet, multosque per annos*
Multa virum volvens durando sæcula vincit.

Georg. II. 291.

Virgil is happy in his choice of the *Beech*: for I was lately informed that a Grove of Beeches, which, according to an authentic Record, were cut down in the year 1666, to fur-

nish timber for the rebuilding of London after the fire, and then replanted, are not yet, in the space of 104 years, arrived to their full growth.

the creation, invested with power and dominion, *is a flower that fadeth* : the image of the eternal and unchangeable God is *a fleeting shadow*. How can these things be? With this question the Philosopher is confounded; and all the wisdom of the world must falter in the resolution of it. It is the Christian only, who receives his wisdom from the word of God, that can reconcile these seeming contradictions. The holy *Job*, who was by no means unacquainted with the history of man, derives the cause of his miseries from the manner of his birth—*Man that is born of a woman*—for by a *woman* sin entered into the world; and sin is the parent both of the sorrows and the shortness of human life.

The Psalmist, speaking of himself as a natural man, saith—*I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me*. Thus is sin interwoven with the nature of man, and makes a part of his constitution from his very birth. *The wages of sin is death*. And by these means the course of things hath been changed: which also seems to be alluded to, where we read, that man is *of few days*; for the original saith, he is *cut short in his days*; his life is not of such an extent as God originally designed it to be. There is a doctrine which seems highly agreeable to
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the Scripture, and hath been well maintained by some early writers in the Church, that, if man had retained his innocence, his life would have lasted for a *thousand years*, and ended, not in death (as it does now) but as that of *Enoch* did, in a *translation* to the presence of God as it is manifested to the angels.

But this privilege was forfeited by the entrance of sin. And it is worth remarking, that the lives of men before the flood were always short of a thousand years. Some there were who came very near to that period; but not one that ever attained it perfectly. Death never failed to call them away, before they had attained the life of Paradise.

Their lives, however, were so much longer than the lives of men are now (the difference being very great between seventy years and seven or eight hundred) that it is certain, man doth not die so early by any original necessity of nature. No tree planted by the hand of God in Paradise had out-lived him, if he had not transgressed the divine command.

But now he is a tree, with an ax laid to the root of it; and is cut down in wrath, long before his life hath reached to its extent: *his bones lie scattered before the pit, like as when one breaketh, and heweth wood upon the earth.*

When

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When the sentence of death was first executed upon the generations of men, the time of their abode on earth was much longer than it is now : God, who remembers mercy even in his wrath, departed as little as might be from his first rule. But in process of time, the corruption and wickedness of the world made it necessary that the period of human life should be contracted to a much smaller number of years * : and this dispensation, severe as it may seem, proceeds wholly from the *mercy* of God, who willeth not the *death* of a sinner, but is desirous that he should turn from his sin and be saved. The world is now a theatre of temptation, sin, and wickedness ; and it is the interest of man, that the days of his pilgrimage in such a place should not only be few, but also that they should be *full of trouble*. For the happiness of man is now to arise from his misery ; as God at first made light out of darkness, which is contrary to it ; and doth generally bring his purposes to pass by such means as seem to be of all others the most unpromising ; in which practice, the difference between the workmanship of God and

* Semotique prius tarda necessitas

Lethi corripuit gradum.

Hor. lib. i. od. 3.

that

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that of man doth principally consist. How many thousands and millions do we see in the world, who, short as life is, seem to think they have many days to throw away in idleness and vanity? And even among those who attend to the precepts of the Gospel, some there are, who think the offices of devotion may be omitted for the present time, promising themselves some future opportunity of attending upon God and the concerns of their own souls. But let them remember, that God hath contracted the life of man into so short a space, and made the date of his days so very uncertain, only that the Christian may be always upon his guard, and be prevailed upon to lose no single opportunity of doing good to himself and others.

Upon the whole then, we have nothing to complain of. Sin and death having entered into the world, this is not a place for any man to set his affections upon: and for this reason, he is *cut down like a flower, and fleeth as a shadow*. By the shortness of his days the number of his temptations are lessened: and yet, short as they are, he has time enough to prepare himself for the kingdom of God; which is the work he is sent into this world to perform.

Thus

Thus far, the view we have taken of this subject hath been but dark and uncomfortable. We will now consider it in another light: for this state, which consists but of *few days*, and those *full of trouble*, is recommended to the Christian, and sanctified, because God himself hath *partaken* of it for this purpose. He also condescended to become man in the person of Christ, and was *born of a woman*. He entered, by the same way, upon the same state we are now in; and, by the purity of his conception and birth of the blessed Virgin, renewed and restored the human nature. In him that sentence was accomplished in every respect, which was originally passed upon the human nature in general. He was of *few days*; cut off in the prime of his life. Which should teach us, that death may come early, without being untimely; and that an early death is not an evil thing in itself, but is made such only by an unprofitable, a careless, and an ungodly course of life. The days of our blessed Saviour were likewise *full of trouble*; trouble of every sort; and first, that of poverty. He was born of mean parents, in a stable, among brute-beasts, at *Bethlehem*.

When he went about doing good, he had not where to lay his head; he was reviled and persecuted for his best deeds; forsaken of all his friends, and afflicted to the uttermost both in soul and body: so full of trouble, that the evangelical prophet calls him *a man of sorrows*.

He *came forth* also as a flower, springing as a root out of a dry ground; and having been agitated by the rough blasts of human pride, diabolical malice, and divine wrath, this *rose of Sharon* bowed its head, and withered upon the cross.

Nor was Christ unlike to his brethren even in the last article—he *fleeth as a shadow and continueth not*. The 109th Psalm, according to the use that is made of it in the New Testament, is to be understood throughout the whole, as spoken in the person of Christ; who declares concerning himself in that prophetic composition—*I go hence like the shadow that departeth*. For this cause came he into the world, that he might taste of death for every man; and every action of his life brought him a step nearer to Calvary and the Cross. In the sight of the unwise his death seemed as vain and unworthy of regard, as the departure of a shadow at the close

close of the evening. Thus did the *righteous perish*, and no man layed it to heart. They accounted him deceitful as a shadow, an impostor, and deceiver, who pretended to be what he was not.

In these things, every believer must find his consolation against the troubles of life, and the fears of death. God himself, being born of a woman, hath experienced all the evils that man complains of: *in all our afflictions he hath been afflicted*: and as that fire had no power to burn, in which the Son of God walked with the three children; so the sorrows of life, and the terrors of death, should no longer be dreaded by the Christian; Christ having endured them for *this* end, that thenceforward they should be deprived of all their force. *Be of good cheer*, says he, *I have overcome the world*—And again—he *that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life*. That frailty and misery, which man uninstructed must esteem as the greatest of evils, is by these means transformed into a blessing. By the sufferings of Christ, and his sacrifice for our sins, all the sufferings of his servants are sanctified; and we may
now

now say—he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. By an act of infinite wisdom, the misery of man is thus turned into a medicine. *Man, born of woman*, is now *born of God*: he that was of few days, is now made a living member of that great High-Priest, who hath *neither beginning of Days, nor end of Life*; and may lift up his head from this state of trouble, in expectation of *new heavens, and a new earth*, from whence all sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The flower that is cut down shall spring up again from its root that lies buried in the earth; yea, *it is not quickened, except it die*: and the shadow that departeth shall be again renewed by the rising of that Sun of righteousness, which shall go down no more.

Such is the view which the Scripture hath set before us of this great and important subject—the uncertainty, vanity, and brevity of human life; under which, as we see (whatsoever the world, the flesh, or the Devil may suggest to the contrary) there is no comfort to be found, but from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and a life ordered according to the precepts of it. Our days being few and evil, he is the only wise
and

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and happy man, who hath the grace *so to number them as to apply his heart unto wisdom*; such wisdom, as will guide him in safety, through this world of *shadows*, to the great *Realities* of the world to come.

DISSERTATION II.

Considerations on St. Paul's Wish to *depart*
and to be with Christ.

With an APPENDIX ON the INTERMEDIATE STATE.

OUR nature teaches us to look upon Death as the greatest of evils; there being planted in the breast of every man living a love of life and dread of Death: therefore the man, who gives himself up to the ways of this world, drives from him the thought of Death, as a bitter ingredient, which would render every cup of earthly pleasure not worth the tasting.

But alas! it is a thing that must and will be thought of; for it is the portion of every child of Adam; and, bitter as it is, the surest way to make it more bitter is to live and act without the remembrance of it. But he
who

who renders this subject familiar to his mind, and examines it by the light of the Scripture, has it in his power (with the grace of God) to change the nature of it; and turn its bitterness into sweetness. Nay, it is even possible for him to *desire* that as a blessing, which in itself is naturally a curse, and justly regarded as such by the greater part of mankind.

We have an example of this in the Apostle St. *Paul*, who *desired* Death as *far better* than life; not better in itself, but better to *him* in his *circumstances*. *I am in a strait*, says he, *betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*. The reasons upon which he proceeded in this case will be worth our considering; for if we reason as he did, and follow the example of his faith, no doubt is to be made but that we shall conclude and determine in the same manner. And when this bitterness of death is conquered by the understanding, this life, so long as it lasts, will be less interrupted and better worth the possessing.

I must allow indeed that a person, who brings himself to this frame of mind, will be more serious, and have less enjoyment of that noise, and madness, and folly which the

world falsely calls by the names of mirth and happiness. But this I will be answerable for, at the same time, that he will *gain* more happiness than he loses, even in this life. It may be hard to convince any person of this; because human life is never well understood but by those who look back upon it. While the imagination is crouded with untried objects, and the judgment over-ruled by passion, the whole prospect is falsely represented: But at the hour of Death, men are undeceived by the experience of their past life; and all those vain shadows disappear, which used to darken and deceive the understanding.

Let us enquire then into the reasonableness of the Apostle's choice in wishing rather to depart than to abide in this world.

This will appear plainly enough, if we examine what his *life* was, and what his *death* was like to be: in other words, what he *lost* by living, and what he was likely to *gain* by dying.

We shall find by what goes immediately before the words in which he expressed his desire of departing, that when he wrote this Epistle to the *Philippians*, he was in a prison at *Rome* for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

Christ: with allusion to which he says, *If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour.* I was appointed a teacher of the Gentiles, to turn them from the power of Satan unto God. I have preached unto them in season and out of season; I have compassed sea and land for the salvation of souls, and the honour of him that put me into the ministry: I have laboured more than the Husbandman for his bread, the Miser for his gold, or the Sinner for the gratification of his lusts: and what is the fruit of it? *This dungeon in which I am confined, and these chains I wear upon my feet—If I live in the flesh, this imprisonment and bondage is the fruit of my labour.*

On another occasion he describes his life in the ministry as a course of labour, stripes, scourgings, shipwrecks, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, poverty and persecution, weariness and painfulness of body, with constant care and perplexity of mind. And speaking elsewhere of himself and his brethren, he applies to them that passage of the Psalmist—*For thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

I think he also affirms of the Christians of those days, that they were introduced to a sort of Death by the conditions of their baptism: they were baptized, not for *the dead* (as the English gives it us) but *for dead* themselves; that is, *as* * men thenceforward alive unto God, but dead to the works of the flesh; to whom riches, and honour, and pleasure were lost and gone; to whom the world was crucified, and they unto the world. And of himself in particular he speaks under the same figure—*I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily*. All the primitive saints had the same opinion of themselves; and *Ignatius* had a way of expressing it with an ambiguity in which there is a singular elegance—*Εμὸς Ἐγὼς ἐσταυρώται*—*My Love is crucified*.

Thus we are prepared to determine upon the case already; that it was better to die *once*, than to die every day. And this perhaps would be true, if death were consider-

* The Greek preposition *υπερ* is not usually taken in this sense; but it doth not appear why it may not be so taken, as the Latin *pro* in these expressions—*pro ciue se gerit*—he behaves *as if* he were a citizen—*pro sano loqueris*—you speak *as* a man of sense.

ed only as a deliverance from temporal evils. But the Apostle does not argue in this manner: he does not say, I am weary of my life, and would be gone at any rate; as some desperate people have said in their hearts, and acted accordingly, by laying on violent hands, and sending themselves as fast as they could out of the world (which in this miserable age is a prevailing fashion with rich and poor): but he compares the present and future together, and then gives his judgment upon the whole—*I desire to depart and to be with Christ*. To *depart* is one thing; to be *with Christ* is another. And this latter was the object of the Apostle's desire: he gave the preference to death, for the sake of those blessed things to which it would certainly introduce him; the chief of which, and under which all the rest are included, is the *Society of Christ*. When our Lord made that promise to the expiring Malefactor on the Cross, *this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*, we may be in some doubt about the meaning of the word *Paradise*, but we all believe that, by virtue of this promise, that man was immediately translated from the misery of the Cross to the enjoyment of peace. The company and presence of the

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Saviour of the world would of itself constitute a state of happiness. While he was conversant here below, he said to his disciples and followers—*Blessed are the eyes, which see the things which ye see—Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them.* And if those Eyes were blessed which saw him darkly through the veil of mortal flesh, when he sat upon a Colt, the sole of an ass, and made his entry into the earthly Jerusalem; what must their portion have been, who saw him triumph over principalities and powers, and enter upon all the glories of his spiritual kingdom?

These are the things, of which the Apostle's faith gave him a prospect, when he said, *I desire to depart and to be with Christ.*

If we now compare the present with the future, as he did when these words were first written, our purpose will be answered at once. His life then, so long as he continued in the flesh, was a state of *labour*, his *departure* would bring him to a state of *rest*. His feet were bound with chains, and his body shut up in a prison; but his chains and his body also would then be left behind, and his Spirit set at liberty for ever. While he lived, the Holy Ghost witnessed in every place,

place, that imprisonments, *bonds, and afflictions*, awaited him; at his death, *that Paradise*, which he had already seen in vision, would be ready to receive him. Here he was tossed about upon the waves of the sea, and those of a more tempestuous world; there he would be above the reach of all storms and troubles. Here he was company for felons and malefactors in a Jail; there he would meet with prophets, saints, and angels. Here he was apprehended and tried at the pleasure of outrageous Jews and unbelieving Heathens; there he would find the almighty judge of Jew and Gentile his best friend, his advocate, and his Saviour. Here he lived a *daily* death; there he would enter upon the enjoyment of *life*, without end and without interruption. These things being weighed in the ballance together, he determined wisely and truly—*to die is gain—I desire to depart and to be with Christ.*

But if the matter is so clear, how is it that we hear him complain of being *in a strait betwixt two*? Was there any doubt that Death would be *better* to him than life? Or did his faith fail upon a nearer view of that dark and untried passage, which leads from this world to the other? Neither of these things

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things happened to him : his choice was not a doubtful one, nor did his faith fail him ; but to his honour it must be confessed, that an higher principle got the better of it. Like a tender father dying before his time, and anxious for the safety of those he is leaving behind, the wife of his bosom, and a family of children not yet grown up and able to provide for themselves ; even so did this blessed Apostle consider, how necessary his presence was for the benefit and direction of the family of Christians but lately added to the Church by his preaching, and not yet established in the faith—therefore he checks his desire in the following words—*nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* For the good of his brethren (or rather his *children*) he receded from his own wishes, and was content, for their sakes, to renew all the labours and sufferings of his ministry, and to put off the enjoyment of heaven itself. His desire to depart was that of a spiritual man, whose affections had lifted him above the the world and the flesh ; and we may think it impossible for him to soar any higher, after such a declaration of his *faith* and *hope* : But he himself hath taught us, that *charity* is above them both ; therefore
his

his best thoughts and desires were over-ruled by this divine principle.

It may now be useful to show, that every true Christian hath reason to judge in the same manner with the Apostle, and wish rather to depart and be with Christ than to abide here in the flesh.

It is not the lot of private Christians in these days to be stoned, and imprisoned, and shipwrecked, as *St. Paul* was. But nevertheless they are exposed to afflictions, and trials, and dangers, more than enough to make the argument complete. For so long as the Christian abides here in the flesh, his bodily part is subject to that curse and penalty, which sin has unhappily brought upon the works of God. He is a part of that *creation*, the *whole* of which *groaneth and travaileth in pain together*. This burden extends to man and beast; yea the very elements themselves are disordered with *fire and hail, wind and storm*, fulfilling the commands of an offended Creator.

From this common law of vanity the Christian is no more exempt than other men — *ourselves also* (saith the Apostle) *which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,*

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tion, to wit, the redemption of our body. If we open our eyes to take a view of the world, it will appear like one great Hospital, abounding with spectacles of sickness and misery; some pining and wasting away with consumptions; others labouring for breath with an asthma, or shaking with a palsy, or tortured with the insupportable agonies of the stone. Some have lost their sight; others, what is more precious, their reason and understanding: many are bowed down with the hopeless affliction of incurable diseases; and if some amongst us feel as if they were now in possession of their *strength*, let them wait a while, and they will soon find it changed into *labour and sorrow*.

So much for the *body*: but the mind is of greater account. The soul of man is lodged in the body, as in its tabernacle or dwelling; but such a dwelling of clay, as we now inhabit, serves rather as a prison to shut up and restrain the faculties of the understanding. The Soul in its own nature is sharp and piercing; but while it abides here, 'tis like a sword rusting in the scabbard. It is formed for reason and reflection, but the more it *muses upon many things*, and gives itself up to those pleasures that are afforded by the contemplation

temptation of truth, so much the more is it *pressed down* by the *corruptible body* in which it is confined. It would understand high things, and fly up as an eagle toward heaven; but it is like a bird endeavouring to take wing, while a weight of lead, tied to its feet, still brings it back again and confines it to the earth.

Such are the evils which the Christian finds *within* himself. If he looks *without* himself, he sees a world in all respects like an howling wilderness, full of wild beasts ready to devour him.

There is *Satan*, that *roaring lion* always seeking his prey about the Church and amongst the servants of God. There are Wolves in sheep's, and sometimes in shepherd's cloathing, stealing away and worrying the flock of Christ. There are Foxes, subtle and false teachers, and seducing Spirits in all shapes, ready to corrupt his mind, and draw him away from that faith which would otherwise lead him to salvation. There are wild Boars, rooting up the vineyard of the Lord, tyrants and persecutors oppressing his servants, and laying waste his heritage.

If we look to his body, *that* is exposed to the secret treachery of the dissembling friend,
and

and the open violence of the declared enemy. His soul is subject to deadly and destructive lusts of the flesh, the dangerous allurements of worldly vanity, and all the suggestions of that grand seducer, who brought death and misery into the world. His goods are exposed to the greediness of the extortioner, the violence of the robber; his lands and houses to overflowing rains, fires, and all misfortunes. His good name is open to slander, his person to contempt and injury. His brethren *should* be his support and strength, but are often his betrayers; and the best comforts of his life do rarely or never fail to be the sources of much sorrow and vexation.

These things are common to all men; but many of them are more common to the good man than the evil, and some of them are peculiar to him. *Many are the troubles of the righteous*, said David; and the way to heaven is *through many tribulations*. Christ bequeathed as a legacy to all his disciples *peace* amongst themselves, but *tribulation* in the world; and he that is a Christian indeed must expect to find it. Therefore afflictions are more common than death; *Enoch* and *Elias* escaped the latter; but none was ever exempt from

from the former. Nay, they are more common than sin itself, which hath laid hold upon all men; for Christ lived without sin, but not without sorrow.

Labour then is a law to all that have Adam for their father, and Crosses are a curse upon all that have Eve for their mother. But all these miseries are at once relieved by death. The bond-slave is set at liberty, and the captive exile loosed from his chain: the brow sweateth not, and the heart careth not any longer. The body defieth famine, sword, and pestilence; and the soul is out of the reach of sin and temptation.

The primitive Christians were so sensible of these things, that they had a way of expressing them all in one word by calling their death an *exodus*; meaning by the application of this term, that death was to them what the *exodus*, or departure from *Egypt*, was to the *Israelites*; who, when they were brought to the passage of the Red Sea, had *Egypt* on this side, and *Canaan* on the other; the *Land of Promise* before them, and the *house of bondage* behind them. Of this latter we have had some prospect in what hath already been said; and now let us examine, as well as we can, what the former is.

Here

32 DISSERTATION II.

Here I am authorised by the Scriptures to affirm, that the soul of a Christian, when it is departed from the flesh, does neither fall into a state of insensibility, nor enter upon that perfect enjoyment of which it will partake after the resurrection of the body. Our Saviour argued against the *Sadducees* from that expression in the Old Testament, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God Jacob*, that these Patriarchs were yet alive, because *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for they all live unto him.*

Thus may we more clearly argue from many declarations in the New Testament, particularly that of St. Paul, *We are willing, I say, and confident, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* Now as Christ said, *God is not the God of the dead but of the living*; so must we say, Christ is not the companion of the the dead, but the companion of the living. Therefore, if the dead are *with Christ*, as the words expressly inform us, they are and must be *alive*; alive in Spirit though they are dead in body, according to the truth and meaning of that promise — *he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*

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The place in which they live is called *Paradise*: what it means we cannot know exactly; nor did the Israelites understand the nature and productions of the land of Canaan. When they packed up their kneading-troughs in Egypt, they had heard of the land to which God was calling them out, and knew it to be a desirable place; therefore they set out with confidence and pleasure at midnight, though not one amongst them all had ever seen the country they were going to. Their forefather Abraham had obeyed the call of God under the like doubtful circumstances, and *he went out not knowing whither he went*. Thus much we know, that when *Lazarus* was carried by Angels to *Abraham's Bosom*, and when the penitent thief was conveyed to the presence of Christ in *Paradise*, they went where every Christian, who is now struggling with the difficulties of this mortal life, would wish to be.

If we could look but for one moment into that place, I am confident we should think of little else all the days of our life: and if God were to command us to make our way to it through the midst of a fire, we should venture upon the experiment, though we were

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sure

sure to leave our bodies burnt to a cinder in the midst of it.

If it was better, then, for *Lot* to leave the city of *Sodom*, and for the *Israelites* to leave the pollution and misery of *Egypt*; it is far better for the servant of God to depart and be with Christ, than to abide here in the flesh.

If we would apply the preceding observations to any good purpose, they should move us to consider, without the loss of a single moment, to what place and to what state Death will translate us. We all have a *departure* in view, as St. *Paul* had; and every man, who is not past feeling, will be in some *strait* when he reflects upon it. It will depend upon our present choice, whether we shall afterwards be present with Jesus Christ and his faithful Apostle; or with *Satan* and *Judas*, and the rest of his enemies. It is a happy thing *so* to depart, as to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord: but it is more miserable than words can express, or heart can think, to depart from this world of ignorance and vanity to another of darkness and torment.

There are too many, who live in wilful ignorance

rance of the Christian faith, in the neglect of God's worship, in idleness and drunkenness, in fornication and adultery, in evil-speaking, flandering, and blaspheming. When such men reflect upon their own conduct, they must have sense enough to know, that if death overtakes them in such a course, it cannot possibly convey them into the presence of Christ. It is shocking to imagine, that the Angels of light should take upon them the office of carrying a worthless and odious soul into the company of that Almighty Being, in whose presence iniquity is blasted, as wax melteth before the fire.

Perhaps they may flatter themselves with objecting, that Christ, while he was here upon earth, was merciful and compassionate to all, to *Jews* and *Samaritans*, to publicans and harlots; insomuch that his enemies upbraided him as the *friend of publicans and sinners*. This is very true; and the best of us all can hope to be saved under no other character than that of sinners; but we are to remember withal, that the sinners, to whom Christ shewed himself a friend, were such as first listened to his word, and then *washed his feet* with the *tears* of repentance.

The Apostle himself was once a *blasphemer* and a *persecutor*; nay he calls himself the *chief of sinners*; but after he had embraced the Gospel, he *knew nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*: his life was thenceforward unspotted, his labours more abundant, and his sufferings above measure; therefore his death was a passage to life, and his departure from hence a translation to the presence of Christ. God, he tell us, had mercy upon him *for a pattern to those who should afterwards believe in him to life eternal*. And his example is a glorious proof to all sinners, that the grace and blessing of God upon their own sincere endeavours may open for them a way to life and immortality. What we are now, that great Apostle himself once was, a man striving against the infirmities and temptations of this mortal life; what he is now we also may be, through the help of God and the merits of our blessed Saviour, who, when he had *overcome the sharpness of death, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers*.

A P P E N D I X

CONCERNING THE

I N T E R M E D I A T E S T A T E.

THE words of *St. Paul* having given me occasion in one part of this tract to insist on the doctrine of the Scripture concerning the *intermediate state*, it may not be unseasonable to carry on our inquiry a little farther.

Eusebius describes a species of heretics in *Arabia*, who maintained that the *Soul* dies with the body *, and lies in that state of Death till the Resurrection. *Origen*, in whose time these heretics arose, was sent to reason with them upon the subject ; and prevailed so far as to bring them over to a voluntary recantation. Yet this *Arabian heresy* (as it is called) hath been occasionally revived since the Reformation, particularly by the *Anabaptists*, according to *Edwards* in his *Gangræna*, Part I. p. 22, and Part II. p. 14, 15.

* Vid. *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. vi. c. 36. an. 249.*

A modern writer, now living, hath taken as much pains to uphold and recommend it, as if it were the chief object of a Christian's hope; and the Author of the *Confessional*, who thinks with every man that thinks against the Christian Church, cries up his doctrine as a most ingenious discovery. But the hope of *mental dissolution* is an hope which agrees best with the inclinations of sensualists and reprobates. I know a man who comforts himself under a course of adultery in his old age with this persuasion, that *when we are dead, we are all one as if we were dogs*. He means, that we sink into a state of insensibility.

If this doctrine were examined by the light of Reason alone, it would be found repugnant to the most generally-received principles of human Philosophy*; and it is certainly inconsistent with Revelation. The Scripture hath taught us, that there are two different principles in the Christian, distinguished by the names of the *outward man* and the *inward man*; the latter of which may be increasing in vigour, while the former is

* Hæc vero, si a meo *mines putaverunt, ad aliquam* sensu post mortem abfutura *animi mei partem pertinebunt,* sunt, si, ut *sapientissimi bo-* &c. Cic. pro Arch.

hasting to its dissolution, 2 Cor. iv. 16. The inward principle is that which is *born again* in baptism; and, being *born of God*, is of a divine nature. Consequently, whatever may be said for or against the *natural immortality* of the soul, this principle cannot be subject to death in common with that nature which is *born of the flesh*.

The body is also described as the clothing of the Spirit; so that the soul is with respect to the body, what the body itself is with respect to the garment that is worn upon it: in conformity to which expression, death is described as the *putting off* of the body. Therefore, as the man, who puts off his clothes, doth not also throw off his body, and lay it aside with his clothes in a wardrobe; so neither doth the Christian at his death put off his spirit to sleep in the grave with his body. It is the *dust* only, the earthly part, which returns to the earth, while the *Spirit returns to God that gave it*. If both are supposed to sink into death together, there will be no sense in that distinction—*fear not them that can kill the body*—because men in such a case are able to kill the soul just so far as they kill the body: and as they both will rise at the

resurrection, the soul will have no privilege left but what is common to the body; so that our Saviour's distinction, instead of being the source of any comfort, will have no meaning. The soul therefore is not dissolved with the body: and that it may subsist in a state of separation from the body, and actually does so subsist after death, is plain from the words of St. *Paul*; who observes concerning himself, when he was caught up to the third heaven, that whether he was *in the body* or *out of the body*, he could not tell. But there could have been no possible doubt, unless he had been well assured, that the soul might be taken out of the body and still retain its sensibility. The same Apostle, in one of the most weighty and striking passages of the New Testament, places the *spirits of just men made perfect* amongst the other spiritual and invisible members of the heavenly Jerusalem or invisible Church; such as the *living God*, *Jesus the Mediator*, and the *innumerable company of Angels*. Commentators in general, without any view to this argument, understand the *spirits* here mentioned as the souls of good men separated from the body: and the word τελειωμενων may

may well be rendered, who have finished or perfected the course of this life.

This *Arabian* Philosophy was therefore no part of *St. Paul's* religion: and God forbid that it should have been; for then the confident hope expressed by himself, in common with all the other ancient and modern Martyrs of the Church, who died in the faith of Christ, and under the assurance of being present with him after death †, would have been a delusion, like that of the Turks, who die fighting for their absurdities and blasphemies, in hope of an immediate translation to a sensual Paradise.

I have here said nothing concerning the appearance of *Moses* and *Elias* in an intermediate state of Glory at the Transfiguration of Christ: because this, and many other facts and expressions of the Scripture, will offer themselves to those who consider the subject more at large *.

† One *Wishart*, a good man, who suffered under Hen. VIII. had been charged with this heterodoxy, but affirmed it at the stake to be a slander, and that he was assured his Soul should be immediately with his

Saviour. Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. II. p. 206.

* See Bp. *Bull's* Sermon on Acts i. 25. and *View of the Times*. Vol. III. p. 250, &c. against Dr. *Coward*, who wrote largely on the mortality of the Soul, in 1707.

Ditton,

Ditton, in his book on *the Resurrection*, hath an Appendix on *Matter's thinking*, wherein he argues very solidly against the Materialists, a sort of Philosophers, to whom the *Arabianists* are very nearly related; the death of the Soul together with that of the body being a necessary consequence of Materialism; and it doth not appear to be consistent with any other principle. The Anabaptists were sensible of this, who, to prove their notion, affirmed that God made *every part* of man of the *dust of the Earth*. Men have generally concluded that the Substance of the Soul must be *spiritual* because it *thinks*; and that it must be *immortal* because it is *spiritual*. So far as the Scripture is concerned, this Author pronounces all the Advocates for the Sleep of the Soul to be either Deists or Sceptics; for which reason he doth not argue with them as *Christians*, but as an eccentric species of *Philosophers*: the matter, in his judgment, being too plain in the Scripture to admit of any dispute. Yet they, who plead for this gloomy philosophy, are persuaded that nothing but the prejudice and bigotry of the age hinders it from being generally received: a persuasion as groundless as their philosophy itself.

Some

A P P E N D I X. 43

Some *Arabians* are commonly supposed to have been the first amongst Christians who asserted the Soul's mortality : but it was certainly a member of that monstrous System, which came very early from the School of *Valentine*; because I find it very distinctly refuted by *Irenæus*, who has an excellent Chapter under this title—*Resurrectio nobis promissa ad spiritus naturaliter immortales referri non debet, sed ad corpora ex se mortalia*. Lib. v. c. 7.

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C O M M E N T A R Y

On R E V. xiv. 13.

In which the NATURE of DEATH is farther
confidered.

THE power of Sin is too manifest
from the universal corruption of the
world; and the dominion of *Death* is the
certain and visible effect of it.

These two articles made a great figure in
the Religion of Heathenism; the ground of
which (so far as it can be separated from
Tradition) was little more than an experi-
mental knowledge of Sin and Death.

In the primitive temptation, when the
Devil moved us to eat of the forbidden fruit,
he pronounced a *knowledge of good and evil*
as a consequence of the act of disobedience.

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As he was a Liar who made this promise, it is little to be wondered at, that one half of it hath fallen short. The knowledge of *good* (whether virtue or felicity be understood by it) is hidden from us : and the knowledge of *evil*, that is, of the evil of sin and the evil of punishment, is all that is now left to us. Nothing is more common than for great Liars to make great promises ; because a promise, which is never to be made good, costs nothing. The Devil therefore, who has ends to serve upon us, is never wanting in promises ; but whoever takes his word will find himself miserably disappointed in the end. By his performance in this first instance we may judge of him in every other : for though he can transform himself into all shapes, he will never be able to speak the truth under any one of them. To counteract the illusions of this evil Spirit, the New Testament brings with it a *voice from heaven*, assuring us that the *Dead are blessed* *. Our first parents were persuaded by the voice of *Satan*, that an act of disobedience would turn a Man into a God : this voice informs us, that faith

* Rev. xiv. 13.

and obedience will turn *death* itself into a *Blessing*. Which two declarations differ as Truth and Error generally do. The former is flattering and plausible, and finds immediate credit: the latter appears strange and contradictory, and cannot be assented to, till many prejudices are overcome, many difficulties removed, and a deliberate inquiry patiently submitted to. Errors are as cheap and as thriving as weeds in the field; but Truth is the fruit of labour and self-denial. The different value of each is sure to be determined by their issues; but folly hath no patience, and therefore takes things according to their first appearance.

The blessedness of the dead is one of the Christian Paradoxes, which cannot be cleared up and justified without a patient investigation: for it must be granted, that Death, in its own nature, is not a *blessing* but a *curse*. When the Creator surveyed the works of his own hands, he pronounced them all to be *good*; and it is declared, upon another occasion, that *for his pleasure they are, and were created*. Rev. iv. Therefore it is not his pleasure that they should be destroyed. But Death is the destruction of man, the most excellent of the visible works
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of God ; which destruction is as strong an evidence of the divine displeasure, as the creation of man was an instance of divine goodness. I think any person must be sensible of this, who compares an healthy living body with a dead corpse ; in which the eyes, that were formed for seeing, are grown dim and sunk into the head ; the hands and feet, that were made for action, are become stiff and motionless ; the ear, wonderfully framed to judge of sounds, now insensible of every impression ; the heart, which never rested since it was created, now cold and silent as a mass of clay ; the blood, which used to flow through the veins, and spread life and warmth to every part, now congealed and frozen up to the fountain-head ; the head, the seat of sense and understanding, now ready to be filled with earth and worms. Let any person contemplate such a shocking spectacle as this, and He will be in little danger of error when He comes to argue and conclude upon it.

Hence death, in itself, can be considered only as an evil ; indeed the greatest of temporal evils ; all the lesser evils of pain and dis-

diseases lead to this, as the waters of springs and rivers fall at length into the sea.

Death is also a curse upon the mind as well as the body ; it keeps men in a state of fear and dread, and consequently of subjection and servitude. The remembrance of it is a bitter ingredient, which poisons the comforts of human life. It is like those poisonous wild gourds, which, being shred amongst other wholesome herbs, rendered them all unfit for nourishment. The heathen shewed the distress and bondage of mind, under which they laboured upon this account, by uttering the most doleful howlings and lamentations for their dead friends, cutting and mangling their flesh, and shaving their heads after a superstitious fashion. Even good men have been struck with anxiety and consternation at the prospect of approaching death. The pious *Hezekiah*, when visited by the prophet *Isaiah*, and forewarned of his end, *turned himself to the wall, and prayed, and wept sore.* *Isaiah xxxviii. 2.* The holy Psalmist likewise expressed the emotions he was sensible of in such words as these — *My heart is sore pained within*

within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. Psalm lv. 4, 5. Yea, Christ himself, who was the most perfect of all men, did yet, as a man, feel within himself these terrors of death, and prayed to the Father that *the cup might pass from him.*

But, besides all this, Death is a shame and disgrace to our nature; and that because it is a punishment. In the punishment, or rather persecution, of *the innocent*, there is no shame; but punishment, when it is the consequence of guiltiness, is shameful in the eyes of all mankind. There is something *hateful*, which the most compassionate beholder cannot abstract from the notion of a malefactor; for which reason such are separated from the society of men, and committed to the filth and darkness of a dungeon. Now the death of every man, though it may seem natural, is really neither more nor less than a judicial execution, because it is the penalty of disobedience. And as all sin is filthy and abominable in the eyes of God, death and pollution are so nearly related, that the old law pronounced every dead corpse unclean, and not fit to be touched, without

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the subsequent ceremony of a formal purification by water. We know very well that this was designed as a moral lesson to purity of mind and manners. Notwithstanding which, there must have been also a sense and propriety in the letter of the law.

The ablutions of the heathens at their funerals had probably the same original, and the same meaning; at least with those who were wise enough to consider the sense of their own ceremonies. In the practice of *burning* their dead, they seem also to have been sensible, that the death of every man is *penal*; an effect of sin which they meant to *expiate*, and of divine wrath which they desired to *pacify*, by a religious offering of every dead corpse as a sacrifice to the infernal Deities. Their whole Ritual was in a manner made up of *expiations* *; and the ceremonies, which were superadded to the act of burning the dead, express such an intention plainly enough. This will account for a remarkable ex-

* See Alexand. ab Alex. lib. v. c. 27. This general thirsting after *expiation* may be sufficient of itself to justify that

expression of the prophet concerning the *Messiah*, where he calls him the *desire of all nations*.

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pression in *Virgil*, on occasion of the funeral of *Misenus*: for why should the pile be called an *altar*, unless the body was laid upon it in the way of a *sacrifice*?

—*festinant flentes, ARAMque SEPULCHRI
Congerere arboribus, cœloque educere certant.*

. *Æneid. vi. 177.*

If all this be true, the question arises, how can death be a blessing? For the understanding of which, it must be considered, that what hath been here said relates to the death of the *natural man*, or child of *Adam*. The death of a *Christian* is another thing: and to teach us this, the Scripture hath added “Blessed are the dead *from henceforth* :” that is, from the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the publication of his Gospel.

Death is not now a punishment, because it is not an instance of divine vengeance. As the penalty of sin, it was inflicted upon Christ, who offered himself a Sacrifice. Upon his head the iniquities of us all were laid; as the sins of the people, according to an institution of the Mosaic law, were ordered to be laid upon the head of the yearly Sacrifice. In his person they were required and visited by the divine wrath;

and if his sacrifice was a satisfactory atonement, then it must follow, in the words of the Apostle, that *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*. Their death is not a banishment of the Spirit from the divine presence, but a returning of it to God that gave it. That door, which seems to shut them out of life, and separate them from the living, admits them into the society of the Father of Spirits. Therefore,

2. Death is no longer a *reproach* to us. All the Shame, that could possibly attend it, Christ took upon himself, that it might no longer be any disgrace to his disciples. He was *numbered with transgressors*, and was content to die the death of a *Malefactor*. He bore the shame as well as the pain of the Cross. And thus by the ignominy of his death, and the righteousness of the person who endured it, our death is made holy. His death was infamous in the sight of the world, that ours might be acceptable in the sight of God. In a word, he submitted to such a death as was pronounced to be *curst* in its kind, that our death might be *blest*.

As to the impression of the terrors of death upon the imagination, he suffered all the horrors

horrors of mind the wrath of God could raise within him, during his bloody sweat in the Garden, that he might be *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*. From this his experience we have an assurance, that he knows how to succour us under the like trial: and may every faithful Christian, in his last hour, find the refreshment which those sorrows purchased for him!

Neither is death now to be regarded as a destroying of the works of God; because the future Regeneration of the body is ascertained by the fact of our Redeemer's Resurrection. He who was the first-born from the dead, an heir of life in his own right, hath secured the same right of inheritance to all the partakers of that nature in which, and with which, he entered upon his glory.

When any man is taking down a building, we do not look upon this as the act of a destroyer, if the design is to erect a better building upon the old foundations. This, God be thanked, is the gracious purpose of our dissolution. The weakness of death leads to the power of the resurrection; corruption is the way to incorruption, mortality to immortality, dishonour to glo-

ry. *We know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

But now we are to observe it, as a main article of our present subject, that this blessedness of death is not general to all mankind, though the Christian redemption is all-sufficient and universal in its nature. It is not said absolutely—*blessed are the dead*; but *blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*. A Christian life, then, is the only introduction to a blessed death. Without that, no hope nor encouragement can be gathered from any passage of the Scripture. To *die in the Lord*, signifies 1. to die a member of his mystical body by baptism. Upon which consideration we are persuaded, that infants, being baptised, and dying in the state of infancy, are translated to the kingdom of heaven; as certainly as the infants of the *Israelitish* people were carried over *Jordan* into *Canaan* (a figure of heaven) without any preparatory trial in the wilderness.

If they live and grow up, the conditions of salvation change as their capacities change; insomuch that the same baptism, which is sufficient to save an infant, is
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sufficient only to condemn those who might, but never do, get any farther. As the Christian advances in life, there must be other evidences of his spiritual union with Christ: for as by baptism he is born to a new state; so by faith, by a partaking of the other sacrament, by prayer, and by a godly life, it must appear that he liveth in him unto whom he was born again; leading the *rest of his life according to that beginning* of it, at which he renounced the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

For 1. it is written, *the just shall live* by faith: whence the great end the Apostle aimed at was to *win Christ*, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Then, 2. it is necessary that our union with Christ should be confirmed by the other sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; for without this, he himself hath pronounced, that we *have no life in us*. But this cannot be true, unless the man, who wilfully neglects the communion, may thereby lose what he gained in his baptism.

Prayer is another sign of our abiding in Christ. Where the Spirit of adoption is, it will be employed in supplication to God,

who, as a father, bestoweth gifts upon his children that ask him. If a man lives, he breathes : And if the Christian lives by the Spirit of God, the breath of prayer will be a never-failing sign of it. Whence it is rightly declared, *that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his : he is disowned, as a dead man, who is no longer reckoned a member of society.*

And lastly, an *holy conversation* in godliness and honesty must insure the privileges of our Christian membership. We must be like our Master in temper and behaviour ; acting with the simplicity of the sheep, instead of that worldly disposition, which is best expressed by the deceit and subtilty of the Fox. *If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature : he hath put off the old man, with his pride, and his malice, and his covetousness, and hath put on the new man. The image of God is restored in him ; for he is created after God (that is, according to that image of God which Adam lost) in righteousness and true holiness.* Again St. John saith, *He that abideth in him ought so to walk as he also walked : which is agreeable to Christ's own declaration—He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth*

forth much fruit. From all which this short inference naturally occurs, that to live fruitless, is to die hopeless.

If we examine this matter more attentively, it will appear, that the *blestness* of those, *who die in the Lord*, is said to consist chiefly in these two particulars.

1. That they *rest from their labours.*

2. That *their works do follow them.* St. Peter instructs us that we are all *strangers* and *pilgrims* in this world : and what doth the traveller hope for but *rest* at the end of his Journey? The life of man is represented to us in a very particular manner by the adventures of the Israelites in their passage from *Egypt* to *Canaan*. Till it pleased God to look upon their condition, they laboured under a state of cruel bondage, in the service of a merciless and atheistical Tyrant, whose chief delight it was to harass and oppress them. Under a like tyranny every man is born ; and would continue in it for ever, if the same God, who brought his people over the Red Sea, did not vouchsafe to translate him from the dominion of Satan, by conducting him through the waters of baptism. When the people had passed safe over the sea, and were encamped in the wilderness, how many temptations,

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tations, difficulties, and dangers had they to struggle with, under the exercise of which, they wandered about for forty years? In like manner is the life of a Christian full of labour and trouble. He is assaulted with divers lusts and passions which war against the soul. If he hath any concern for the glory of God and the salvation of men, the overflowings of ungodliness must of course harass and vex him, so as to render his situation like that of *Lot* in *Sodom*. If he lives long, infirmities and sorrows bend him down every year nearer to the earth out of which he was taken. The primitive Christians, besides their ordinary labours of temptation, sorrow, and infirmity, were exercised with the sharper and bloody trials of persecution; flying from city to city, to avoid the rage of blinded Jews and blood-thirsty heathens. From all these troubles death set them free; whence, as it was observed in the preceding Dissertation, they called their death an *Exodus**: no other word could so aptly express their happy translation from labour to

* So St. *Peter* calls it, Ep. remarks — *hic exitus figuratus* II. c. i. 15. on which *Grotius* per illum ex *Agypto*.

rest,

rest, and from bondage to liberty. How glad were the Israelites, when they saw the fruitful hills and vales of the promised land stretching away before their view on the other side of Jordan, when all the trials of the wilderness were past, and their tedious journeyings and encampments brought to a conclusion? How glad was *Lot*, when he had escaped from the execrable *Sodom*, and found a peaceful refuge in *Zoar*? How happy is the Merchant, who, having been tossed upon the waves of the sea, and in danger of shipwreck, finds himself at last safe in the port? So happy is the soul, which hath taken its flight from these regions of sin and sorrow; which, having *died in the Lord*, is admitted to the enjoyment of light and peace in that intermediate state of Paradise, to which Christ himself departed while his body lay in the grave; and where the Saints both of the old and new Dispensation rest in the *bosom of Abraham*; expecting that great day, when those gates of heaven shall again be opened, through which the King of Glory entered after his ascension from the earth. What man, who considers the labours of this life, and dares look forward to that *rest which remaineth*
for

for the people of God, what man, I say, can refrain from wishing, in those words of the Psalmist — Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest?

But, God knoweth, all men are not in a condition to utter such a wish as this, being discouraged by that second consideration — *their works do follow them*. In this consists the blessedness of those who *die in the Lord*, that none of their good works will be lost or forgotten in the sight of God. The tears of their repentance, their prayers and devotions, their patient suffering for the truth's sake, their deeds of mercy and charity, all these things are now noted in the book of God, and shall hereafter be remembered. Then will they have honour, whom the world despised; Angels will celebrate the acts of those conquerors in the cause of God and of righteousness, whose lives the fools accounted as madness.

Every difficulty, which now meets us when we consider the lot of a righteous man, will then be cleared up. If he hath served God in a low estate here, he shall then be held in honour. If he hath promoted peace upon earth, and met with nothing but hatred for his good will, he shall then be
owned

owned amongst the children of God. If he hath delighted in works of mercy, and received nothing here in return for them, he shall then receive, what all the powers upon earth cannot bestow, even the *forgiveness of his sins*; and, having shewed mercy, shall find mercy at the hands of God. If he hath suffered shame, loss, or persecution of any kind, for righteousness' sake, the kingdom of heaven, which God will permit him to claim as his own, will infinitely more than ballance the account. Therefore, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

The Church being like that net, which was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind both good and bad; this Essay may fall into the hands of very different readers, some of whom are in the way to those blessings which the Saviour of the world hath in store for them, and whose *works*, thro' his *merits*, will justify them in the great day of retribution. There are others, whom Death, whenever it shall come, is not like to translate to the region of the blessed, and whose *works will follow them*,
only

only to bring them into everlasting confusion. The drunkard may now vaunt himself, and scoff at the terrors of death and judgment. If his profane Jests, and all the horrible oaths that are intermixed with them, were written down upon paper, and repeated in public before his face, he would be abashed, if his sober reason and senses were about him. What will be his confusion then, when all his expressions, from the heaviest of his blasphemies down to the lightest of his idle words, shall be exposed before men and angels? How will blasphemy appear, should it be rehearsed in the ears of a sinner, and confronted with the tremendous Majesty of the Almighty, seated upon the clouds of heaven, with darkness under his feet, the noise of thunder rolling through the skies, and flames of lightning flashing round about him? No man should be so weak as to imagine, that I am dressing up this sight, to make it terrible: for all the words we can bring together will never describe one half of the terrors of divine vengeance, or paint the amazement of those, to whom conviction shall come when the day of repentance is gone. Now then let them consider, that they have an account to give; that their most secret actions are noted, yea, and the
very

very thoughts of their hearts registered in heaven. Now let the covetous remember, that all the unjust gain he hath been heaping up will be left behind him; while the deceit and oppression, with which he got it, will follow him into his grave, and stick close to his dust, and rise again to meet him in the day of judgement. Cursing, swearing, lying, cheating, debauchery and drunkenness are now looked upon as the several ingredients of mirth and jollity; but what will they be then? For if any man accepts of such company in this world, it will follow him into the world of Spirits, and cry after him for vengeance.

Thrice happy then is he, who, in the days of his health and strength, before the evil days of age and weakness have overtaken him, hears that celestial *voice* of the Evangelist, *Blessed are dead which die in the Lord, &c.* daily founding in his ears, stirring him up to farther degrees of faith and devotion, and keeping him ever mindful of that last great Account, which can be rendered supportable by nothing but a timely preparation.

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